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VACA VALLEY RADIO CLUB

VACAVILLE, CALIFORNIA

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May 2011

President's Message

Scott Joseph, KI6YYZ

Hi All,

If you didn't attend April's meeting, you missed an excellent presentation by Dean Straw, N6BV. He is the go-to-guy for all things concerning propagation, antennas and contesting. Not to worry, we will have more speakers and presentations soon.

Hope to see you at the next meeting. 73!

Scott KI6YYZ

2011 Walk for Babies

Here is the information as published on the March of Dimes website for our area:

Vacaville—Peña Adobe Park
When: April 17, 2010
Where: 4600 Pena Adobe Rd, Vacaville, CA 95688
Walk Distance: 6.25 miles
Registration Time: 8:00 AM
Start Time: 9:00 AM

We will be discussing our club participation this week at the club meeting. We have supported this event for many years now and look forward to as many club participants as possible to provide communications support for this fund raising event and our community.

Food and a T-Shirt will be made available to anyone who participates in this event. Bring your 2m/70cm radio and dress warmly, the morning air is still a bit chilly.

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Around the Shack

By Jerry Olive, KD6WKY

I opened the mail and found this QSL card this weekend from the VU4PB DXpedition last March over in the Andaman Islands, India. For some reason India has been one of the countries I rarely hear on the air or see spotted on clusters. The team of all East Indian VU2 radio amateurs set up this DXpedition.

From listening to presentations by other groups that have tried to get licensing to do a DXpedition in India, it takes forever to get the paperwork done. The culture and bureaucracy have no sense of urgency. I remember discussing this with someone in the know who told me it easily takes over a year to just get the results of an exam and an initial license even for locals. I wonder if a little payola would speed things along?

In the past few weeks another DXpediton to Central Kiribati was done. T31A was on the air for about 10 days on all the HF bands. This is what I like to call back yard DX. From here, this area of the South Pacific is pretty easy to work. A simple vertical antenna or dipole antenna and 100w on 15 meters is all it takes to get there right now. I worked them on six bands without difficulty. This was a new one for me. I already have West and East Kiribati in the log and confirmed, but have never worked Central Kiribati before.

I tried to work TU5JM in the Ivory Coast, Africa the other night on 20 meters SSB but couldn't break through the pile up. He as very loud to the west coast at about 0330 UTC. Lots of stations trying to work him, unfortunately though there were several peanut gallery type stations interfering with this rare DX station and spoiled the fun for a few of us. I don't understand that.

The other day I was fortunate to work Rafiq JY4CI in Jordan on 20 meters SSB. In checking on his QSL route I discovered he as a US QSL manager so I don't have to spend too much on a QSL card, just 44¢ both ways.

I am a Log Book of the World subscriber so I don't send out QSL cards to everybody any longer. I try and wait a

few weeks to see if the other station confirms via LoTW first. Last night I was preparing QSL cards for stations I worked a month ago; I usually get a confirmation within a few weeks from LoTW subscribers. When I updated my log this morning, of course, two Russian stations popped up that I had just written out cards for last night. It happens. I'll send them my card via the QSL Bureau anyway.

Zero, Slashed Zero, Letter "O", Alt-0216 Ø and Phi Φ

By Anthony A. Luscre K8ZT

Successful Amateur Radio communication often depends on a set of well-defined and unambiguous specifications. Just think of the problem of meeting a friend on the air for a predetermined QSO, The two most important factors are of course time and frequency for successful QSO. If we use an ambiguous time, it is easy for the other party to mistake when they need to be on the air. 9 o'clock can mean A.M. or P.M. whereas 21:00 is clearly 9:00 P.M.

Also if both parties are not local the question of which time zone is being used may arise. Good ham practice usually uses UTC to remove the time zone question. Especially when using UTC it is very important to make sure it is the correct day, for example here in Ohio 01:00 UTC Saturday is actually 8:00 P.M. Friday locally.

The second concern to successfully meeting is to be on the proper frequency. Modern radio's digital readouts make this fairly easy, but only if the correct frequency is stated. 14.005 and 14.050 have the same digits but are quite far apart on the dial!

Another area where mistakes can easily creep in recording another stations call sign in your log. No matter if it is paper or computerized logging SO2B is quite different from S02B. Poland instead of Western Sahara can be a real let down or the avid DXer. Reading the previous sentence you might have not even noticed the difference between the two call signs. The first call is Sierra Oscar Two Radio and the second is Sierra Zero Two Radio. The problem is that zero and letter O are often difficult to distinguish in most type fonts. Of course computerized logging and QSLing have greatly compounded this problem.

The best solution is to find a font that uses characters that look very different for O and Zero. Some fonts use wider and narrow characters to distinguish the two, unfortunately I and many other operators forget which is which even if then can see the difference! A better solution is a font that use a slash or dot across or inside the circle that makes up the zero character. So called "Slashed Zero Fonts" can be a great help to hams. There are a number of different slashed zero fonts include below for you to download. The zero and often the other characters have different appearances that will appeal to a variety of different tastes.

The fonts below use the True Type technology, which works within MS Windows and makes the fonts available to almost all modern software programs. In the pre-Windows days most individual fonts were either controlled by installation in specific software programs (although they were available system-wide many years before to the early Mac users!) or as part of your printer (many higher end printers had slide in font cartridges.)

To get around the pre-Windows font problem many astute users discovered that they could trick programs to show a slashed zero like character by using a special ASCII character. By holding down the Alt key then typing 0216 on the number pad a character Ø, used mostly in Norse alphabets, was produced (for this column I will display it in read to distinguish it from a true slashed zero.) This looked fine on most printed documents but a big problem occurred when you attempted to electronically manipulate call signs containing this special character-- they did not sort correctly because of course they were not zeros. The problem was even more acute when you tried to use the Ø in mathematical manipulations such as spreadsheets, again because it was not a zero strings of digits containing it did not add, subtract, multiply or divide correctly. Another trick character used was the Alt 1000 or Φ or more correctly called Phi Greek character. Again the results were often disastrous in all but printed copy.

Recently the problem has raised its ugly head again, this time in automated scoring process of contest log checking and the ARRL's Log Book of The World electronic QSL system. As you can quickly see if a submitter uses Ø, Φ or even mistakenly the letter O the call sign submitted will not match any in the checker's database of valid call signs, resulting in zero points and usually a deduction of a few penalty points!

So the rules for unambiguous and accurate logging:

1. Always use the correct character. Be careful to strike the correct key O or 0

2. Never use Alt 0216 Ø or Alt 1000 Φ in your log.

VACA VALLEY RADIO CLUB—2009
ELECTED OFFICERS

President: Scott Joseph, KI6YYZ
Vice President: Marcus Maclean, KI6WDX
Secretary: Jerry Olive, KD6WKY
Treasurer: Bob Hewitt, K6HEW

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Director: Skip Lawson, AF6HC
Director: Chris Jones, KD7TQO
Director: Antonio Del Rio, N6ZGB
Director: Tom Christman KE6MDM

APPOINTED POSITIONS

Net Control Chairperson: Marcus Maclean KI6WDX
Activities Chairperson: Board of Directors
Newsletter Editor: Jerry Olive, KD6WKY
Newsletter Publisher & Distributor: Bob Hewitt, K6HEW

3. When speaking always say "zero" instead of "oh" when referring to a number (one acceptable alternative is saying "aught" or "naught" for zero).

4. Find a good, easily read font that you like and install it on all your computers. User preferences will vary with some preferring fixed width and others variable width fonts.*

- The differences between fixed and variable width fonts can be explained by going back to typewriter days. Typewriters always moved a uniform distance to the right no matter which character was struck. For example the width of three iii was equal to that of three WWW as below:
-

iii
WWW
<>This is an example of fixed or monospaced font. Commonly installed fixed fonts on Windows computers often have "Courier" in the name. With variable width fonts the amount of movement to the write is varied according to the letter of the alphabet and the font style used. Using above example with variable font:
iii
WWW
Advantage of variable width fonts is they usually appear more pleasing to the eye with a typeset print appearance. Advantage of fixed width fonts is that columns of characters line up directly below each other as in example at left below:

Editor's Note: go to http://www.k8zt.com/zero.html to see the examples.

The ARRL Ham Aid Fund Needs Your Help to Support Radio Communications in Alabama

The ARRL's Ham Aid Fund has been tapped to aid Amateur Radio operations in Alabama, following the **wake of destructive killer tornadoes that ravaged the state last week**. According to ARRL Chief Development Officer Mary Hobart, K1MMH, hams in Alabama have requested radios and antennas, since cell tower sites and repeaters have been damaged and are not yet back up. "The ARRL has already shipped five cases to the state, full of 2 meter, 440 MHz and HF radios, as well as two cases of handheld transceivers with batteries," she said. "We anticipate the demand for equipment may continue from Alabama and possibly from neighboring states."

Hobart said that she knows that not every ham can be in Alabama to help out, but every ham can support the effort -- by contributing to the ARRL's Ham Aid Fund: "First created in response to Hurricane Katrina in 2005, the Ham Aid Fund has enabled ARRL to provide vital communication equipment to devastated areas along the Gulf Coast. Now the fund is purchasing equipment and funding shipping costs to meet the needs of hams in Alabama, as well as our served agencies such as the Southern Baptist Men's Kitchen and the American Red Cross."

How can you help? Hobart said that the best way is to make a contribution of $25, $10 or $5 -- or whatever you can afford. The ARRL will use your contribution to respond to the calls for assistance from Amateur Radio operators where repeaters, antennas and radios have been damaged or destroyed. "And this event may be just the beginning," she explained. "As hurricane season is on the horizon, we need to be prepared for those situations when all else fails. The easiest way to make your donation is on the **ARRL website**. Use the simple form and designate your contribution to the ARRL Ham Aid Fund. We'll put your gift to work right away in the affected area. On behalf of the ham community in Alabama, thank you!"

James McLaughlin, WA2EWE/T6AF, Killed By Afghan Pilot

James McLaughlin, WA2EWE/T6AF, was one of several Americans killed in Kabul, Afghanistan on Wednesday, April 27. News sources say that eight American troops and a US contractor died Wednesday after an Afghan military pilot opened fire during a meeting in an operations room of the Afghan Air Corps at the Kabul airport -- the deadliest episode to date of an Afghan turning against his coalition partners, officials with the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISF) in Afghanistan said. McLaughlin -- a retired US Army Lieutenant Colonel -- was a contractor serving as a flight instructor for Afghan pilots.

Licensed since 1972, McLaughlin was a career US military officer. Bob Magnani, K6QXY, told the ARRL that McLaughlin was just in the US a week ago, visiting his family:

THE VVRC WELCOMES YOU

The Vaca Valley Radio Club has proudly served the Northern Solano County Area since 1988. We pride ourselves in providing a friendly place for radio amateurs to meet and improve their operating skills.

We participate in public service events throughout the year and are always ready to assist with communications during times of emergency.

Browse our website for more information about our club. If you have any questions please email us at w6vvr@vacavalleyradio.net or call 707-448-5665 for assistance.

The Repeater is Published by the Vaca Valley Radio Club, PO Box 143, Elmira, CA 95625-0143, An ARRL Affiliated Club. Founded 1987, Chartered 1988 General Meetings: 2nd Wednesday of each month at 7:30 PM 420 Vine Street Fire Station.

Wheelchair accessible

Visit the Repeater online courtesy of Bob K6HEW at:
http://vacavalleyradio.net

Club repeater in Vacaville:W6VVR 145.470 MHz(-) pl 127.3
The W6VVR net call is Tuesday evenings at 8pm on the club repeater. All are invited to participate in this weekly meeting on the air. 73!

Additional local repeaters
WV6F 224.200(-)

"His son Adam, KD6POE, works for me. He told me that his dad had been in Afghanistan and Iraq many times over the past few years, most currently serving as a flight instructor." McLaughlin posted on his qrz.com page that "almost every day, I operate at around 1230 - 1430 UTC. Sometimes I am QRV until around 1500 UTC."

Voice of America Correspondent Steve Herman, W7VOA/T6AD/HL9OA -- currently in Seoul, South Korea -- remembers meeting McLaughlin for the first time. "I first met Jim in August 2009 when we were the only two hams operating in Kabul," he wrote in an e-mail. "We exchanged tips on operating in our unusual environment. Jim had put together a fine radio shack in his quarters and was especially enthusiastic about his RTTY and PSK capabilities, as well as the ladder line-fed wire dipole he had managed to string up at a height of 50 feet through some trees.

"Less than 24 hours after our initial discussion, a suicide bomb went off in Kabul near the spot where we had arranged to meet. The blast killed seven people and injured nearly 100. The explosion site was also close to Jim's QTH and it blew out windows in his residence adjacent to the US Embassy. It was obvious from spending time with Jim that ham radio was an important morale-boosting pastime and he usually spent a couple of hours per day QRV, logging thousands of QSOs" As of March 26, 2011, McLaughlin had logged 4359 QSOs, most of them on RTTY and PSK.

McLaughlin was also an active MARS operator. "He was one of our most dedicated MARS members in Army MARS Region 11," Dan Wolff, KA7AGN/DL4VCW/AEM1WF/AEA1RD, told the ARRL. Wolff is the MARS Region 11 Director. "He relayed and delivered literally hundreds of MARSgrams every year for our region. I've known him for many years and he was always devoted to supporting our deployed service members. He will be deeply missed on MARS circuits and the ham bands as well." -- *Thanks to Russ Bentson, K6KLY, CNN and Fox News for the information*

Space Weather Prediction Center to Discontinue Broadcasts on WWV and WWVH

Beginning Tuesday, September 6, the Space Weather Prediction Center (SWPC) will cease broadcasting its geophysical alert message on WWV and WWVH. These messages inform listeners of the solar flux, the mid-latitude A and K indices and space weather storms, both current and predicted. Currently, the message is heard on minute 18 from WWV and minute 45 from WWVH. The information will still be available on the SWPC website. If you care to comment on this, or if you have any questions, the SPWC -- part of the National Weather Service (NWS) -- would like to hear from you.

Editor's Note—Quiz question for the next time I run the net, who is the voice of WWV? Bill WA6CAX told me.

California Supreme Court Declines to Hear Antenna Zoning Case

The California Supreme Court refused to hear the **antenna zoning case** brought forth by Alex Zubarau, WB6X, of Palmdale, California -- with the assistance of his ARRL Volunteer Counsel Len Shaffer, WA6QHD -- after receiving a **mixed decision** by the California Court of Appeals earlier this year. The Supreme Court -- California's highest court -- handed down their decision on April 20.

In 2005, Zubarau applied for a building permit to erect an antenna support structure on his property. The City of Palmdale approved his request, and building permit in hand, Zubarau installed a 22 foot tall crank-up tower (with an ultimate height of 55 feet), but did not place an antenna atop the structure. He also installed a 23 foot tall mast on his house, for a total mast height of 43 feet; he installed an inverted-V on the mast. In January 2007, he placed a 4 element 20 meter SteppIR antenna on the crank-up tower, and the neighbors started complaining to the City.

ARRL Southwestern Division Vice Director Marty Woll, N6VI, said that the neighbors' assertions consisted of what he called "the typical complaints: aesthetic impact, diminution of property values and RF interference." The RFI complaints were general in nature; no direct evidence was shown of actual RFI, but the City's Planning Commission staff took the position that "based on anecdotal evidence presented by the homeowners, the transmissions occurring from the antenna are causing interference with electrical equipment in the surrounding neighborhood."

Woll said that after Zubarau installed the SteppIR in 2007, the City of Palmdale -- acting on a petition signed by almost 70 of Zubarau's neighbors -- voted to revoke Zubarau's original building permit after he had relied on it in putting up his tower. "In order to gain a continuance, Zubarau told the Planning Commission he would remove the SteppIR, in essence, reverting his antenna configuration back to the way to it was before he installed the antenna" Shaffer -- who put in hundreds of hours of time on this case at no cost to Zubarau -- said. "At the next hearing, he was ordered to remove not only the antenna, but the support structure, as well."

After Zubarau exhausted his administrative remedies, he challenged the action in the courts, aided by Shaffer. A court date was set for February 2009. On February 6, 2009, Los Angeles Superior Court Judge David Yaffe issued a ruling in favor of Zubarau. According to Shaffer, the Superior Court's ruling invalidates the actions of the City in revoking Zubarau's permit and requires the City to allow him to replace the tower.

In January 2011, the California Court of Appeals, Second Appellate District, **issued its *Opinion*** in Zubarau's case. The Court found that the Palmdale antenna ordinance, as it pertained to the height limit for vertical antennas, was "unenforceable" because it allowed a radio amateur to have a vertical antenna up to 75 feet high when measured from the ground but limited the "active element of the antenna array" to

or "active element" and did not specify from where the 30 permitted feet for such "array" was to be measured. The Court found that if even one reasonable interpretation of the ordinance could be found, the ordinance could be upheld, but that in this case, no one could understand what the limitations were and how they could be applied. That portion of the City's ordinance was therefore unconstitutional and unenforceable.

The Court also held that the ordinance was unenforceable to the extent that it attempted to regulate radio frequency interference. The City maintained that it could regulate RFI, but the Court, citing case law and argument in ARRL Amicus Curiae brief, held that only the FCC could regulate RFI. Any State or municipal law that attempts to regulate RFI is preempted.

But the Court held that Palmdale properly ordered Zubarau to remove his permitted 55-foot crankup tower. The Court opined that the small, VHF/UHF vertical on the roof constituted "reasonable accommodation" under PRB-1 and California PRB-1 statute (California Government Code Section 65850.3). The Court said that leaving Zubarau with a VHF/UHF antenna constituted a reasonable accommodation because it allowed him to be active in some part of Amateur Radio. There was no analysis of the "minimum practicable regulation" test in PRB-1 and the California statute, so that part of the three-prong PRB-1 test was left unexamined. The Court of Appeals said they thought this was a reasonable accommodation because it allowed Zubarau to be active in some part of Amateur Radio. At the time, Shaffer called this decision "troubling." It was this matter that Zubarau and Shaffer hoped the California Supreme Court would review.

PLEASE RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP

VACA VALLEY RADIO CLUB, INC.

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION / RENEWAL FORM

Please Print & Fill in Completely — Dues are delinquent January 1st

Name: _____ Call Sign_____
Street: _____
City: _____Zip: _____
Phone: (_____) _____-_____OK to Publish ?(_____)
License Class: _____ ARRL Member ?(_____)
E-Mail Address_____

FAMILY Member (Spouse or Children)

Name: _____ Call Sign_____
License Class: _____ARRL Member ?(_____)
Name: _____ Call Sign_____
License Class: _____ARRL Member ?(_____)
Name: _____ Call Sign_____
License Class: _____ARRL Member ?(_____)

MEMBER Dues ----------$20.00 _____
Each Family Member ---$ 2.00 _____
Student ----------$ 5.00 _____
Repeater/Autopatch donation--- _____
Call/Name badge ---------$10.00 _____
Optional ARRL membership
ARRL dues----------$37.00 _____
Senior is 65 yr or older with one time proof on age.

Total---------- _____
Paid by CASH: ____ Check #_____
DATE:_____

Mail to : Vaca Valley Radio Club, PO Box 143, Elmira, CA 95625-0143